

# **City of Auburn Parks, Arts & Recreation**

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## **Award-winning After School Program in Auburn receives grants from King County**

The Olympic Leadership Academy (OLA) program recently received a \$50,000 grant from King County Children & Family Commission, which funds programs that utilize multiple community resources to help at-risk youth, as well as a \$2,000 grant from the King County Community Organizing Commission for substance abuse and violence prevention. Additional funding for the program is provided by the City of Auburn and the Auburn School District. All services are provided free of charge for the student. Coordinated by the City of Auburn Parks, Arts & Recreation Department, the Olympic Leadership Academy program is supported by many partners including the Auburn School District, ACAP Child and Family Services, and Centro de Amistad Latino.

Four days a week during the school year, over 40 energized teens bounce into the cafeteria of Olympic Middle School in the Auburn School District to participate in the award-winning Olympic Leadership Academy. The two-hour a day program is designed to improve academic standards for the participating students, thereby increasing self-confidence, academic retention, and reducing the prevalence of youth crime, violence, and involvement in the criminal justice system.

OLA is designed to serve 40 predominantly Latino youth students per day who are at high-risk of academic failure. Over 14% of the student body at Olympic Middle School is Latino and another 15% are Native American. Over half the student body participates in the free or reduced lunch program—an additional indicator of economic need.

Parallel to current state-wide statistics for Latino students, approximately 85% of the Latino students at Olympic Middle School do not meet WASL standards in mathematics, a key component the OLA program is designed to address.

The OLA program has three main components: an academic component that focuses primarily on mathematics; a youth development component that includes an emphasis on developing leadership and social skills; and a family support component that includes a family advocate to coordinate parental involvement in school activities and make arrangements for adult education. OLA staff is comprised of Auburn School District para-educators and instructors, and City of Auburn Recreation staff. Together, this team works directly with Olympic teachers to link daily classroom math lessons with

after-school enrichment activities. Each day, one hour of the program is dedicated to math instruction to improve the achievement gap for at-risk students, followed by one hour of recreation games and art projects that encourage youth to explore hobbies, participate in physical activity, and learn social skills. Community leaders are invited to teach additional enrichment activities such as salsa dancing, basic guitar, conflict resolution, and cultural heritage appreciation. Parents of program participants have access to parenting classes and programs as well as volunteer opportunities within the program.

Now in its third year, previous program evaluations for the Olympic Leadership Academy have shown: 53% of the participants have improved their participation in math class; 64% of the students have improved their self-confidence in math; and 100% of the students surveyed reported that OLA had helped them in some way. In 2006, the program was recognized by the Washington Recreation and Park Association (WRPA) as the Outstanding Teen Program in the State of Washington.

For more information about Olympic Leadership Academy, call Auburn Parks, Arts & Recreation, 253-931-3043 or visit [www.auburnwa.gov](http://www.auburnwa.gov).

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